JOSH STEIN
Governor

D. REID WILSON
Secretary

JONATHAN HOWELL
Director

SF-2-2026

PROCLAMATION

RE: 2026-2027 OYSTER MECHANICAL HARVEST RESTRICTIONS – ROTATIONAL HARVEST CULTCH SITES

This proclamation establishes the Rotational Harvest Cultch Sites in the Pamlico Sound and identifies sites open to commercial harvest of oysters from public bottom by mechanical methods, in accordance with the N.C. Oyster Fishery Management Plan Amendment 5. The fishery will close on March 31, 2027, in accordance with N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03K .0201, unless closed sooner by proclamation.

Jonathan Howell, Director, Division of Marine Fisheries, hereby announces that effective at **sunrise on Monday, November 16, 2026,** in the areas described below, **the following restrictions will apply**:

I. **MECHANICAL HARVEST RESTRICTIONS**:
   A. Oysters may be taken by mechanical methods (See General Information Section VIII. E., G., I., K., and S. for other gear restrictions).
   B. It shall be unlawful to transfer oysters from the catching vessel to any other vessel during oyster harvesting operations or to transport oysters by any vessel other than the vessel in which they are harvested.
   C. It shall be unlawful to possess more than five (5) bushels of unculled catch onboard a vessel. Only material on the culling tray is exempt from culling restrictions.
   D. It shall be unlawful to possess accumulated dead shell or accumulated oyster cultch material while underway and not engaged in mechanical harvesting.
   E. It shall be unlawful for the catch container (bag, cage) attached to a dredge to extend more than **two** feet in any direction from the tooth bar.
   F. It shall be unlawful to tow a dredge unless the point where the tow line or cable exits the vessel and goes directly into the water is on the port or starboard side of the vessel forward of the transom.
   G. It shall be unlawful to possess a dredge while engaged in oyster harvesting activities in an area closed to the use of mechanical methods for oyster harvest.

II. **HARVEST DAYS AND TIME PERIOD**
Mechanical oyster harvest will be allowed **Monday through Friday from sunrise until 2:00 P.M. each day**. **Oyster dredges must be out of the water and stowed on deck after 2:00 P.M. each weekday** (See General Information Section VIII. C., F., and M.).

III. **MINIMUM SIZE LIMIT**
It shall be unlawful to possess oysters less than three (3) inches shell length for oysters taken on public or private bottom (See General Information Section VIII. J.).

IV. **ROTATIONAL HARVEST CULTCH SITES OPEN TO MECHANICAL HARVEST (SEE MAP)**

Rotational Harvest Cultch Sites are approximately 10 acres in size and are marked at each corner of the site. Sites open to mechanical harvest of oysters will be identified with an orange flag affixed to the top of each marker (See General Information Section VIII. T.). The location of the Rotational Harvest Cultch Sites **open** to mechanical harvest for the 2026-2027 season are as follows:

A. **Turnagain Bay #1 (Neuse River Management Area)**

SW Corner	34° 59.928' N	76° 30.637' W
NW Corner	35° 00.047' N	76° 30.637' W
NE Corner	35° 00.047' N	76° 30.490' W
SE Corner	34° 59.928' N	76° 30.490' W

B. **Turnagain Bay #2 (Neuse River Management Area)**

SW Corner	34° 59.473' N	76° 30.026' W
NW Corner	34° 59.683' N	76° 30.107' W
NE Corner	34° 59.703' N	76° 30.026' W
SE Corner	34° 59.494' N	76° 29.946' W

C. **Bay River (Neuse River Management Area)**

SW Corner	35° 11.076' N	76° 35.887' W
NW Corner	35° 11.195' N	76° 35.887' W
NE Corner	35° 11.189' N	76° 35.740' W
SE Corner	35° 11.070' N	76° 35.740' W

D. **Swan Quarter #1 (Pamlico River Management Area)**

SW Corner	35° 22.626' N	76° 19.675' W
NW Corner	35° 22.746' N	76° 19.668' W
NE Corner	35° 22.745' N	76° 19.522' W
SE Corner	35° 22.625' N	76° 19.529' W

E. **Parched Corn Bay (Northern Dare Management Area)**

SW Corner	35° 36.008' N	75° 45.704' W
NW Corner	35° 36.120' N	75° 45.793' W
NE Corner	35° 36.189' N	75° 45.699' W
SE Corner	35° 36.095' N	75° 45.597' W

V. **ROTATIONAL HARVEST CULTCH SITES CLOSED TO MECHANICAL HARVEST (SEE MAP)**

Rotational Harvest Cultch Sites are approximately 10 acres in size and are marked at each corner of the site. Sites open to mechanical harvest of oysters will be identified with an orange flag affixed to the top of each marker (See General Information Section VIII. T.). The location of the Rotational Harvest Cultch Sites **closed** to mechanical harvest for the 2026-2027 season are as follows:

A. **Crab Hole #1 (Northern Dare Management Area)**

SW Corner	35° 46.201' N	75° 39.356' W
NW Corner	35° 46.319' N	75° 39.349' W
NE Corner	35° 46.313' N	75° 39.202' W
SE Corner	35° 46.194' N	75° 39.208' W

B. **Crab Hole #2 (Northern Dare Management Area)**

SW Corner	35° 45.115' N	75° 38.693' W
NW Corner	35° 45.271' N	75° 38.687' W
NE Corner	35° 45.267' N	75° 38.572' W
SE Corner	35° 45.112' N	75° 38.578' W

C. **Swan Quarter #2 (Pamlico River Management Area)**

SW Corner	35° 19.597' N	76° 20.534' W
NW Corner	35° 19.707' N	76° 20.531' W
NE Corner	35° 19.703' N	76° 20.368' W
SE Corner	35° 19.593' N	76° 20.373' W

D. **Jones Bay #1 (Neuse River Management Area)**

SW Corner	35° 12.845' N	76° 31.671' W
NW Corner	35° 12.936' N	76° 31.812' W
NE Corner	35° 13.009' N	76° 31.733' W
SE Corner	35° 12.923' N	76° 31.590' W

E. **Juniper Bay (Pamlico River Management Area)**

SW Corner	35° 20.989' N	76° 14.151' W
NW Corner	35° 21.120' N	76° 14.149' W
NE Corner	35° 21.117' N	76° 14.014' W
SE Corner	35° 20.986' N	76° 14.018' W

F. **Jones Bay #2 (Neuse River Management Area)**

SW Corner	35° 13.127' N	76° 30.676' W
NW Corner	35° 13.223' N	76° 30.636' W
NE Corner	35° 13.154' N	76° 30.463' W
SE Corner	35° 13.058' N	76° 30.502' W

G. **Deep Bay (Pamlico River Management Area)**

SW Corner	35° 22.192' N	76° 22.814' W
NW Corner	35° 22.314' N	76° 22.813' W
NE Corner	35° 22.313' N	76° 22.669' W
SE Corner	35° 22.191' N	76° 22.670' W

H. **Crab Cove (Pamlico River Management Area)**

SW Corner	35° 21.031' N	76° 17.893' W
NW Corner	35° 21.160' N	76° 18.049' W
NE Corner	35° 21.220' N	76° 17.974' W
SE Corner	35° 21.091' N	76° 17.818' W

I. **Rockhole Bay (Neuse River Management Area)**

SW Corner	35° 11.363' N	76° 32.755' W
NW Corner	35° 11.462' N	76° 32.842' W
NE Corner	35° 11.532' N	76° 32.724' W
SE Corner	35° 11.433' N	76° 32.637' W

J. **Berry's Bay (Northern Hyde County Management Area)**

SW Corner	35° 31.622' N	75° 57.071' W
NW Corner	35° 31.756' N	75° 56.927' W
NE Corner	35° 31.702' N	75° 56.847' W
SE Corner	35° 31.565' N	75° 56.989' W

K. **Cedar Bush Bay (Northern Dare Management Area)**

SW Corner	35° 49.408' N	75° 40.034' W
NW Corner	35° 49.523' N	75° 40.034' W
NE Corner	35° 49.523' N	75° 39.879' W
SE Corner	35° 49.408' N	75° 39.879' W

L. **Long Bay (Neuse River Management Area)**

SW Corner	34° 57.792' N	76° 26.838' W
NW Corner	34° 57.881' N	76° 26.836' W
NE Corner	34° 57.877' N	76° 26.627' W
SE Corner	34° 57.788' N	76° 26.630' W

VI. HARVEST RESTRICTIONS

A. It shall be **unlawful** to harvest oysters by mechanical methods in the areas described in **Section V**.

B. It shall be **unlawful** for persons holding a Standard Commercial Fishing License with a shellfish endorsement to take or possess more than **ten (10) bushels** of oysters per fishing operation per day, regardless of the number of persons, license holders, or vessels involved in the area described in Section IV. C. (Bay River). (See General Information Section VIII. L.) The harvest vessel is a part of the fishing operation.

C. It shall be **unlawful** for persons holding a Standard Commercial Fishing License with a shellfish endorsement to take or possess more than **fifteen (15) bushels** of oysters per fishing operation per day, regardless of the number of persons, license holders, or vessels involved in the areas described in Section IV. A. (Turnagain Bay #1), B. (Turnagain Bay #2), D. (Swan Quarter #1), and E. (Parched Corn Bay). (See General Information Section VIII. L.). The harvest vessel is a part of the fishing operation.

VII. TRANSPORTATION EXEMPTION

Commercial fishing operations shall be exempt from the transportation requirement set out in 15A NCAC 03I .0120 when transporting oysters in waterbodies that are closed to harvest. Commercial fishing operations are not exempt when in possession of oysters and harvesting oysters in a closed area.

VIII. GENERAL INFORMATION:

A. This proclamation is issued under the authority N.C. General Statutes 113-134; 113-170.4; 113-170.5; 113-182; 113-182.1; 113-221.1; 143B-289.52; and N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rules 15A NCAC 03H .0103 and 03K .0201.

B. In accordance with N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03H .0103, it is unlawful to violate the provisions of any proclamation issued by the Fisheries Director under their delegated authority.

C. A permit is required for the use of mechanical gear to harvest from private shellfish leases and franchises in accordance with N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03O .0211. N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rules Section 15A NCAC 03O .0500 describes the procedures and requirements to obtain permits. Contact the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries Shellfish Lease and Aquaculture Permit Coordinator; 252-515-5500 or 800-682-2632 for more information.

D. It shall be unlawful to possess or sell oysters without a harvest tag affixed to each container in accordance with N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03K .0109.

E. N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03K .0204 lists areas closed to the use of mechanical methods to take oysters; N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03N .0104 prohibits the use of mechanical methods to take oysters or clams in primary nursery areas; N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03K .0108 prohibits the use of mechanical methods to take oysters or clams within any established bed of submerged aquatic vegetation.

F. N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03K .0106 prohibits the taking and unloading of oysters between the hours of sunset and sunrise on any day.

G. N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03J .0303 prohibits the use of dredges weighing more than 100 pounds except in the Atlantic Ocean; prohibits the use of more than one dredge per vessel to take oysters or crabs; and prohibits possession of oysters aboard a vessel with a dredge weighing more than 100 pounds.

H. **N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03L .0203 allows for the incidental take of blue crabs in oyster dredges at 10% of the total weight of the combined oyster and crab catch or 100 pounds, whichever is less.**

I. N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03I .0101 defines mechanical methods for oyster harvest.

J. N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03K .0207 exempts permitted aquaculture operations from bag and size limit restrictions.

K. N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03K .0209 prohibits the taking of oysters and clams and the use of mechanical methods for oyster or clam harvest in oyster sanctuaries designated in N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03R .0117.

L. **Mechanical oyster harvesters may possess no more than 10 bushels of oysters while working in the restricted areas identified in Section IV. C. Mechanical oyster harvesters may possess no more than 15 bushels of oysters while working outside of the restricted areas and may transport their catch through the restricted area to the point of landing.**

M. **N.C. General Statutes 113-168.2 and 113-169.2 require mechanical harvesters to hold a Standard Commercial Fishing License with a shellfish endorsement. Crew members working under the direction of a person who holds a valid Standard Commercial Fishing License with a shellfish endorsement are not required to hold a shellfish license.**

N. **Maps are provided to aid in the identification of the specified areas described in Section IV. Maps do NOT supersede existing rules or supersede proclamations closing areas to harvest by reason of pollution. The military restricted areas and danger zones shown on the proclamation maps are closed to civilian access pursuant to federal rules 33 CFR 334.410 and 334.420. These closures render these areas unavailable for oyster harvest. Visit the online Shellfish Sanitation Temporary Closure Public Viewer at: https://ncdenr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=5759aa19d7484a3b82a8e440fba643aa**

O. In accordance with N.C. General Statute 113-221.1(c) all persons who may be affected by proclamations issued by the Fisheries Director are under a duty to keep themselves informed of current proclamations.

P. **In accordance with Shellfish Temperature and Sanitation Controls Proclamation SS-1-2026:**
   1. It is unlawful to possess oysters or clams in a commercial fishing operation without a harvest tag recording the time of the start of harvest, and information as described in N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03K .0109, affixed to each container of oysters or clams. The time of the start of harvest shall be the time when the first oyster or clam is initially removed from the water.
   2. It is unlawful for harvesters to fail to deliver oysters and clams harvested from Coastal Fishing Waters to a licensed shellfish dealer **within 12 hours of the time of the start of harvest**.

Q. In accordance with N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03K .0202, it shall be unlawful to possess oysters with accumulated dead shell, accumulated oyster cultch material, a shell length less than three (3) inches, or any combination thereof that exceeds a five (5) percent tolerance limit by volume.

R. In accordance with Shellfish Proclamation SF-2-2025, it shall be unlawful to harvest oysters by mechanical methods in the Deep-Water Oyster Recovery Areas (DORAs) at the mouth the Pamlico and Neuse rivers.

S. All other existing oyster harvest rules and proclamations remain in effect. For additional oyster harvest restrictions outside of the Rotational Harvest Cultch Sites described above, see https://deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/marine-fisheries/rules-proclamations-and-size-and- bag-limits/fisheries-management-proclamations#currentprocs to refer to those SF-type proclamations for oyster regulations that may be effective in the areas covered by this proclamation.

T. In accordance with N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03I .0121(b), removal, relocation or absence of any boundary markers shall not have the effect of changing the classification of any body of water or portion thereof. Where there is conflict between boundary markers or signs and boundaries described in proclamation, **boundary descriptions in proclamation shall prevail**.

U. The intent of this proclamation is to establish **Rotational Harvest Cultch Sites** open to the commercial harvest of oysters by mechanical methods from public bottom in accordance with the N.C. Oyster Fishery Management Plan Amendment 5.

V. Contact N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, P.O. Box 769, Morehead City, NC 28557; 252-515-5500 or 800-682-2632 for more information or visit the division website at https://deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/marine-fisheries .

W. **This proclamation establishes the Rotational Harvest Cultch Sites in the Pamlico Sound and identifies sites open to commercial harvest of oysters from public bottom by mechanical methods, in accordance with the N.C. Oyster Fishery Management Plan Amendment 5. The fishery will close on March 31, 2027, in accordance with N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03K .0201, unless closed sooner by proclamation.**

By: Jonathan Howell
Jonathan Howell, Director
DIVISION OF MARINE FISHERIES

November 5, 2026
10:45 A.M.